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# OUR SOLDIERS

AND THE

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A San Francisco Enterprise

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MAY 1 1918

## FOREWORD.

The Secretary of Interior, Hon. Franklin K. Lane, has recently called attention to the handicap suffered by our army through the presence therein of many thousands of men who are ignorant of our language.

The Commission of Immigration and Housing of California takes pleasure in presenting the following brief account of how patriotic men and women of San Francisco have met the emergency, in the hope that other communities will follow the worthy example.

The gratitude of the Nation is due these pioneers, who have volunteered time and energy, after performing a full day's task in the schools.

Again are we reminded of the truth of the fact that patriotism today can be displayed at home as well as on the battlefield and that to win the war all agencies must cooperate.

March, 1918.



## ILLITERACY AMONG OUR SOLDIERS.

The war is rapidly introducing America to its own social and economic conditions—to itself. Each national stock-taking discovers many things hitherto unknown and unsuspected. Chief among these great surprises is the national importance of the alien question, as indicated by an analysis of the official figures of the draft published as the report of General Crowder, Provost Marshal General:

Total alien registration .....	1,243,801
Allied aliens .....	772,744
Neutral aliens .....	148,274
Enemy aliens .....	40,663
Allied with enemy aliens .....	282,120

The seven states with the greatest registration of foreign born men between the ages of 21 and 31 are:

New York .....	239,333
Pennsylvania .....	176,054
Massachusetts .....	105,390
Illinois .....	99,399
New Jersey .....	76,969
Ohio .....	70,718
California .....	64,960

Following close upon this report comes the information from the Federal Commissioner of Education that, while the regular army refuses illiterates, the national army now numbers nearly 40,000 men who can neither read nor write, and many times that number who can not speak the language of the country for which they are fighting.

These facts are causing much perplexity, as well as anxiety in industrial circles, and are militating against army discipline.

Army drill is a science in itself and has a vocabulary of its own; but the army has no machinery for teaching illiterates our language; yet literacy and familiarity with English are essentials for efficient soldiers.

There being neither national nor state plans to meet this problem. the responsibility for providing such education in cantonments is now thrown upon the communities in which these camps are located. With an estimate, worked out on the law of average, that the United States today has 5,000,000 illiterates and more than that number of people who can not speak the language of the country, each state can now, from General Crowder's report, figure out its own task and *be wise in time*.

### San Francisco's Way.

The attention of the Board of Education of San Francisco was lately called to the fact that nearly three hundred men at the Presidio and

Fort Scott were in need of instruction in English, and the following table was presented, of men who do not speak, read or write English readily :

Italian -----	50	Swedish -----	16
Lithuanian -----	13	German -----	6
Polish -----	63	Croatian -----	1
Russian -----	14	Portuguese -----	3
Austrian -----	3	Spanish -----	2
Finnish -----	21	Bohemian -----	8
Slavonic -----	5	Danish -----	1
Greek -----	7	Hungarian -----	2
Norwegian -----	8	Svenska -----	1
French -----	3	Montenegro -----	1
Bulgarian -----	1	Flemish -----	1
Hebrew -----	7	English -----	45
Belgian -----	1		
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A committee composed of Miss Regan, member of the Board of Education, Dr. Anne Nicholson, director of foreign classes of the city schools, and Mr. White, educational adviser of the Y. M. C. A., called upon Colonel Marsh and Major Wright at the Presidio, and confirmed the report of the urgent need of teachers. The military officials then promised to arrange for class quarters and for transportation to and from the end of the car line, if teachers could be secured. (See Memorandum last page of this leaflet.)

As there was no fund with which to pay necessary teachers, it was decided to give an opportunity to volunteers from the regular school force. Notices were sent to the various schools, merely stating that those interested in teaching English to foreign born men now serving in our army could report for volunteer service at a meeting called for March 7, 1918, two days distant, and that about thirty teachers would be required.

A representative from the State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California had the privilege of attending this meeting where more than two hundred of the best high and elementary women teachers crowded the Civil Service rooms at the City Hall, eager to offer volunteer trained service.

Miss Regan of the school board stated the object of the meeting. Mr. White, the educational adviser of the Y. M. C. A., gave some supplementary information. Then Dr. Anne Nicholson, the newly appointed director of the city foreign classes, made a brief talk on general principles and methods of teaching foreigners, after which she distributed specially prepared leaflets with instructions as to their use. Then the teachers were formally registered for as many and such nights of service as they could give; stating at the same time any special language qualifications.



With the announcement that as soon as this registration could be tabulated the necessary teachers would be notified and that the first detachment would report for duty on the following Monday night, the meeting adjourned. Not, however, until many of the women had decided to spend Saturday at the Civil Service rooms preparing charts and cards especially designed to carry the language to soldiers.

Monday night, March 11, 1918, at 6.45, two devoted women members of the school board, the director, and thirty-two of San Francisco's best teachers were met at the gates of the Presidio and conducted to the pupils who awaited them in two crowded mess halls, one at the Presidio and the other at Fort Scott.

By arrangement of the officers, the men were divided arbitrarily according to nationality, and thus a delicate task of transformation was begun on this first evening. Through permission from the Federal Naturalization Bureau, its educational registration card was used for registration; and from this card, though simple, much valuable pedagogic aid is available. For instance, one teacher had an Arabian with whom she could make no headway until she consulted the card, upon which was noted the fact that the only English with which the man was acquainted was a few words pertaining to his occupation—peddling women's underwear. The way was opened, and she began building a vocabulary around the few words already learned for his trade, conducting him, skillfully, from the known to the unknown.

From these cards it was also learned that there were native born Americans who were absolutely illiterate—one of these from Massachusetts.

On the second night it was decided to reclassify; and the director began with the mass and asked all who could not speak any English to stand. Assisted and pushed forward by their more fortunate fellows, these men were soon distributed to teachers. Those who could speak English, but needed reading and writing, were easily segregated, leaving the third division as "understanding a little." With this broad classification, the work is now proceeding.

All lessons center around the military life. The vocabulary is selected to develop understanding of camp and field orders and to educate for participation in the general activities of the encampment. The Board of Education sent out twelve American flags; and at the end of the first week, progress had been made towards an understanding of the words, preparatory to teaching the Star Spangled Banner and other national songs which are a positive and useful part of the educational scheme.

Many of the men are reading and writing for the first time and seem even more anxious to do this than to speak. Watching their comrades

writing letters home and receiving their mail has made a deep and lasting impression upon the illiterate; but the teachers are too intelligent to allow reading and writing to supersede speaking and understanding which, undoubtedly, is the primary requisite for army discipline and American life.

The classes are increasing rapidly, fifty new men reporting on the third night; and men not required to take a course are asking for more advanced work on lines necessary to their military progress.

The rude barracks are taking on necessary equipment and conveniences. Maps and a large globe have appeared. The school board has bought and donated enough readers, "English for Coming Americans," selected because of the vocabulary at the end of the book, and the Fisher and Call books for occasional use. It has also furnished supplies and many privileges; but above all, through its indefatigable women members, it is giving encouragement and adding enthusiasm to the war service of its splendid company of volunteers.

The State Board of Education has allowed the use of its writing system and furnished two hundred copy books. The Y. M. C. A. has supplemented supplies.

The State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California has sent out 250 copies each of two of its publications, "A Discussion of Methods of Teaching English," and "The Spirit of the Nation," a collection of patriotic selections and the words and music of our national songs.

This gives the bare outlines of the general helpfulness towards the endeavor; but it takes close personal knowledge of the daily routine, of the loyal spirit which quickens and sustains the teachers who are thus giving themselves to this task; it takes a realization of the helplessness in any situation of men in America who can not speak our language; it takes an intelligent comprehension of what this means to our country, to understand the full significance of this volunteer service of the women teachers of San Francisco; a service that gives itself to our soldiers, but in so doing helps toward the broader work of establishing a standard of teaching English, that has never been attained and which is now acknowledged to be one of the greatest needs of America.

SPECIMEN LESSONS PREPARED BY SAN FRANCISCO  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL COURSES FOR  
UNITED STATES ARMY MEN AT THE PRESIDIO AND FORT  
WINFIELD SCOTT.

LESSON I.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
My home is \_\_\_\_\_  
I belong to the \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_  
I was born in \_\_\_\_\_  
I have been in the United States \_\_\_\_\_ years  
I speak the \_\_\_\_\_ language.  
I write the \_\_\_\_\_ language.  
I can read \_\_\_\_\_  
I speak very little English.  
I \_\_\_\_\_ write English.  
I \_\_\_\_\_ read English.  
I wish to learn the English language.  
I wish to read English.  
I wish to write English.

LESSON II.

I enlisted in the United States Army \_\_\_\_\_  
I entered the United States Army \_\_\_\_\_  
I am a private in the \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_  
My corporal's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
My captain's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
The first lieutenant's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
The second lieutenant's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
The captain's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
The colonel's name is \_\_\_\_\_  
The major's name is \_\_\_\_\_

LESSON III.

This is my head.	My head is on my shoulders.
This is my body.	This is my right shoulder.
These are my arms.	This is my left shoulder.
This is my right arm.	This is my neck.
This is my left arm.	This is my chest.
These are my two arms.	These are my fingers.
This is my right leg.	These are my ten fingers.
This is my left leg.	This is my wrist.
This is my right hand.	This is my knee.
This is my left hand.	This is my ankle.
This is my right foot.	This is my hip.
This is my left foot.	This is my elbow.

LESSON IV.

I see with my eyes.	I work with my hands.
I hear with my ears.	I walk with my feet.
I smell with my nose.	I talk with my tongue and lips.
I eat with my mouth.	I feel with my fingers.
I see the hat.	I hear the bugle.
I see the gun.	I hear the bell.
I see the desk.	I hear the voice of my captain.

Etc.

Etc.

LESSON V.

I have two hands.  
I have two feet.  
I have two arms.  
I have two legs.  
I have two eyes.  
I have two ears.  
I have one mouth.

I have two cheeks.  
I have one nose.  
I have two shoulders.  
I have two knees.  
I have ten fingers.  
You have two hands, etc.  
He has two hands, etc.

LESSON VI.

Hold up your right hand.  
Hold up your left hand.  
Hold up both hands.  
Hold up ten fingers.  
Point to your right foot.  
Point to your left foot.

Lift your right foot.  
Lift your left foot.  
Point to your right.  
Point to your left.  
Point to your right eye.  
Point to your left eye.

Etc.

(Give these directions, acting them as you give them. Let the men say "I hold up my right hand," etc., or "This is my right foot," etc. "I point to my left," etc. Then allow one of the men to give the commands. Take your place with the rest and answer with them, etc.

In giving statements containing *left* and *right*, face the same direction as the class.

LESSON VII.

I walk towards the door.  
I get to the door.  
I stop at the door.  
I take hold of the knob.  
I open the door.  
I close the door.  
I shut the door.

I walk towards the window.  
I stop at the window.  
I open the window.  
I close the window.  
or  
I raise the window.  
I lower the window.

Choose activities that can be acted out. Repeat, letting different men act out the instructions. The occasion furnishes the activities.

LESSON VIII.

A. Vary the foregoing exercise by allowing the men to say what you are doing; *e. g.*, the teacher steps to the board and takes a piece of chalk and writes on the board. The men say, "You are going to the board. You are taking a piece of chalk. You are writing on the board. You put the chalk on the desk. You erase the writing on the board."

Suggested activities:

Get ready to write a letter.  
Get your hat and put it on.  
Put your coat on.

Take a book, open it, and begin to read.  
Close the book and put it on the desk.  
Get a book from the shelf or case.

B. Let one of the men take the place of the teacher. Let the class say, as he acts, "He is going to the board," etc.

LESSON IX.

*Lesson on the Flag.*

Every country has its flag.  
England has its flag.  
France has its flag.  
Italy has its flag.  
Etc.

This is the United States flag.  
These are the stripes of the United States flag.  
These are the stars of the United States flag.  
There are thirteen stripes.  
There are seven red stripes.  
There are six white stripes.  
Thèse thirteen stripes stand for the first thirteen states.  
There are forty-eight stars.  
These stand for the forty-eight states of the Union.  
The red stands for courage, the white stands for purity, and the blue stands for truth or justice.

(See chart on flags.)

LESSON X.

*Continuation of the lesson on the Flag.*

The flag is raised to the top of the flagstaff.  
The flag is hoisted in the morning.  
The flag of the United States is called the Star-Spangled Banner.  
It is sometimes called the Stars and Stripes.  
The Star-Spangled Banner is the national song of the United States.  
The band plays the Star-Spangled Banner.  
Everybody rises and sings the Star-Spangled Banner.  
Everybody pledges allegiance to the flag.  
They pledge allegiance solemnly.  
The flag stands for liberty and justice for all.  
The pledge to the flag is:

"I pledge allegiance to my flag, and to the Republic for which it stands. One Nation, indivisible—with liberty and justice for all."

LESSON XI.

*Study the meaning of the following:*

squad	The corporal and seven <i>privates</i> form a <i>squad</i> .
platoon	Three or four <i>squads</i> form a <i>platoon</i> . The platoon is commanded by a lieutenant or a sergeant.
company	Four or more <i>platoons</i> form a <i>company</i> . The company is commanded by a captain.
battalion	Four companies form a <i>battalion</i> . The battalion is commanded by a major.
regiment	Three battalions with a headquarters company, a machine-gun company, and a supply company form a <i>regiment</i> . The regiment is commanded by a colonel.

Use these words in numerous sentences, substituting the names of the different divisions, and the names of the officers.

## LESSON XII.

*Terms connected with the position of the soldier "AT ATTENTION."*

Hold the head erect, and squarely to the front.

Keep the eyes straight to the front.

Draw the chin in.

Hold the shoulders square.

Lift the chest.

Hold the body erect and resting equally on the hips.

Draw the hips back slightly.

Let the arms and hands hang naturally.

Let the thumb touch the seam of the trousers.

Hold the knees straight but not stiff.

Let the heels touch the same line, as close together as possible.

Let the feet be turned out equally at an angle of 45 degrees.

Let the weight of the body rest equally upon the heels and balls of the feet.

(To the teacher: Do not attempt to illustrate the positions. Allow one of the men to do so.)

## HEADQUARTERS COAST DEFENSES OF SAN FRANCISCO

*Fort Winfield Scott, California*

MEMORANDUM

March 8, 1918

Organization Commanders submitted pursuant to memorandum No. 39, these headquarters, current series, the names of men of their commands who were unable to speak English, or unable to read or write English. Since those names have been submitted some of the men referred to have been transferred to other organizations, and they should be located by organization commanders for compliance herewith.

There will be a meeting at the Presidio in Cantonment Building 127, North Cantonment at 7.00 p.m., and at the Post Exchange, Fort Winfield Scott, 7.45 p.m. on Monday, March 11, 1918, for the purpose of arranging classes for the instruction of these men in English.

Organization Commanders within Fort Winfield Scott reservation will send all of the men of their commands whose names were submitted, as aforesaid, to the Post Exchange at the time above referred to, sending them in charge of a non-commissioned officer, who will submit a list of the men of the organization so sent.

Organization Commanders of Coast Artillery troops now quartered in the North Cantonment in the Presidio Reservation will similarly send men of their organizations whose names were so submitted to Cantonment Building No. 127, at the time indicated, such men to be sent under charge of a non-commissioned officer, with a list of the names of the men so sent.

The lists of names in duplicate will be turned in at the two points of meeting, lists to serve as a basis for arranging classes.

BY ORDER OF COLONEL MARSH:

A. G. WRIGHT

Major C. A. N. G.

Adjutant



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